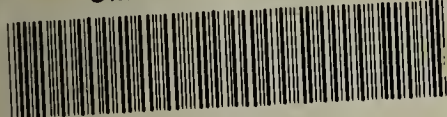
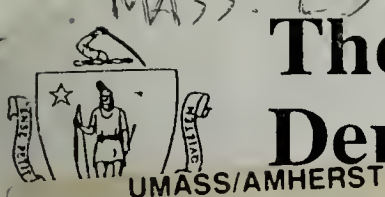


The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Department of Education



312066016809875

100 Morrissey Blvd., Malden, Massachusetts 02148-5023 (617) 388-3300

DOCUMENT COLLECTION

SEP 15 1993

University of Massachusetts
Depository Copy

Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth Recommendations on the Support and Safety of Gay and Lesbian Students

Public health and educational research has documented that gay and lesbian students and other students dealing with sexual identity issues face increased risk of violent victimization, harassment, and discrimination, impeding their ability to do well in school. In addition, due to low self-esteem, lack of support, and family difficulties some of these students may be at greater risk for alcohol and other drug abuse, suicidal behavior, infection with HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, and homelessness.

In response to these concerns, Governor William F. Weld signed an executive order on February 10, 1992 establishing the Governor's Commission on Gay and Lesbian Youth. On February 25, 1993, the Commission issued its first report, Making Schools Safer for Gay and Lesbian Youth: Breaking the Silence in Schools and In Families which makes recommendations regarding educational issues.

Based on the recommendations made by the Governor's Commission, school leaders should be encouraged to discuss and adopt the following steps to improve the safety of schools and school-based support services for these young people:

1. **Schools are encouraged to develop policies protecting gay and lesbian students from harassment, violence, and discrimination.**

In order to guarantee the rights of all students to an education and to prevent dropping out, school policies should include sexual orientation within anti-discrimination policies as well as within policies which guarantee students' rights to an education and to equal access to school courses and activities.

In order to make schools safe for all students and to prevent violence and harassment, schools should amend existing anti-harassment policies to include prohibiting violence, harassment, and verbal abuse directed against gay and lesbian students and those perceived to be gay or lesbian. Incidents of anti-gay abuse should be treated with the same discipline procedures as other incidents involving bias and hatred.

2. **Schools are encouraged to offer training to school personnel in violence prevention and suicide prevention.**

In order to prevent violence in schools, teachers, guidance counselors, and all school staff should be provided with training in violence prevention and suicide prevention, including the particular issues/concerns of gay and lesbian students.

932/54

- 3. Schools are encouraged to offer school-based support groups for gay, lesbian, and heterosexual students.**

In order to support students who are isolated and may be at high risk for suicide, high schools should establish support groups where all students, gay, lesbian, and heterosexual may meet on a regular basis to discuss gay and lesbian youth issues in a safe and confidential environment. These gay/heterosexual alliances should be open to all students and should have a faculty advisor and support from the school administration.

- 4. Schools are encouraged to provide school-based counseling for family members of gay and lesbian youth.**

School systems should extend existing student support teams, guidance services, and partnerships with community agencies to provide counseling services to gay and lesbian youth and their families.

